

on Intelligence of the House of Representatives;

(2) the term “appropriate Federal banking agencies” has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1813);

(3) the term “Bank Secrecy Act” means—

(A) section 21 of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act (12 U.S.C. 1829b);

(B) chapter 2 of title I of Public Law 91–508 (12 U.S.C. 1951 et seq.); and

(C) subchapter II of chapter 53 of title 31, United States Code;

(4) the term “Federal functional regulator” has the meaning given that term in section 509 of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (15 U.S.C. 6809);

(5) the term “illicit finance” means the financing of terrorism, narcotics trafficking, or proliferation, money laundering, or other forms of illicit financing domestically or internationally, as defined by the President;

(6) the term “money services business” has the meaning given the term under section 1010.100 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations;

(7) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Treasury; and

(8) the term “State” means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, and each territory or possession of the United States.

Subtitle D—Rule of Construction

SEC. 291. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this title or the amendments made by this title (other than sections 216 and 236(b)) shall be construed to limit the authority of the President under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.).

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I just want to say to my colleague, the Democratic leader, that I think this is a good example of the Senate at its best. We all know this has been a period of rather partisan sparring back and forth on a variety of different things, but both sides were able to put that aside and deal with two important issues in a very significant way. I think it is good for the Senate and good for the country, and I thank the Democratic leader for his comments.

COUNTERING IRAN'S DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of S. 722.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the bill.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 722) to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Crapo) amendment No. 232, as modified, to impose sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation and to combat terrorism and illicit financing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

U.S. TRAVEL TO CUBA

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, rumor has it that on Friday the President will announce a change in U.S. policy to-

ward Cuba. There are lots of different rumors about what that might entail. I thought I would talk for just a couple of minutes about the consequences of such action, what has been accomplished in Cuba, what our goals are, and what I think our goals should be.

We have had a long policy of isolation with regard to Cuba. For more than 50 years, we tried to isolate the island and hoped the government would change somehow. It didn't. For more than 50 years, we have prohibited Americans from freely traveling to Cuba. We have had periods that the restrictions have gone down a bit and then up again, but by and large Americans have been prohibited, unless they fall into certain classes, to travel to Cuba. Then, when they are in Cuba, their travel around the island, the activities they undertake, are specifically prescribed by the U.S. Government.

I always thought that certainly there is a place for economic sanctions. Sometimes they can help nudge countries or push countries toward a desired outcome—but a travel ban? You only impose a travel ban under extreme circumstances, such as when national security reasons dictate, and there hasn't, for a long time, been national security reasons for a travel ban. I have always thought that as an American citizen that if somebody is going to limit my travel, it ought to be a Communist, somebody from another country that wouldn't let me in, not my own government to tell me where I can and cannot travel. I think most Americans feel that way.

I think we ought to first consider whom these sanctions are on. The sanctions we have had for so many years have not really been on Cubans; they have been on Americans. Gratefully, the previous administration lessened these restrictions or lessened the impact around them. Around 2008 or 2009, the last administration said that Cuban Americans should be able to travel freely at least. Prior to that, we had instances where Cuban Americans would have to decide, if their parents, for example, were still in Cuba and were aging, maybe their mother was infirm—they had to decide if my mother passes away, do I attend her funeral or if my father passes away within 3 years—see, it used to be that Cuban Americans were limited to travel to the island just once every 3 years. They had to decide whether to attend their mother's funeral or their father's funeral. What a terrible thing for our government to tell American citizens, that they have to choose whether to attend their father's funeral or their mother's funeral. What kind of a country is that? Why would we do that? Yet we did for a number of years.

Gratefully, the last administration lifted restrictions on Cuban-American travel and at the same time lifted considerable restrictions on remittances, allowing money to flow more freely to relatives and others on the island. That

coincided with the time the Cuban Government realized they couldn't employ every Cuban, not even at \$20 a month, so they said: Go ahead and find another line of work in the private sector, run a bed and breakfast, have a private restaurant, have an auto repair facility or a beauty shop. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans have done so over the past 5 years, largely with seed capital provided by travel from Americans, particularly Cuban-American travel and remittances.

So there was a situation where virtually no Cuban was employed in the private sector 5 years ago, but today as much as 25 percent of the Cuban workforce is now in the private sector. They have obviously more economic freedom. The average waiter in a Cuban private restaurant brings in \$40 to \$50 a day, while the average Cuban working for the Cuban Government brings in \$20 to \$30 a month. So there is significantly more economic freedom for those in the private sector in Cuba but also significantly more personal freedom as well. That is a good thing. That stands with the policy and goal we always had to increase freedom for the Cuban people.

Now we hear that the administration may want to turn back some of that progress and say that Americans shouldn't be able to travel as freely or as frequently to Cuba. Some of the rumors say they will limit travel to once a year. We don't know if that will be for Cuban Americans or all Americans. By the way, it seems rather strange to have a policy that is ethnically based, where we say: You are a Cuban American, you can travel, but if you are another type of American, you can't. That just seems pretty un-American. We can't get back into a situation where a Cuban American, living in the United States, will have to choose whether they can attend their mother or their father's funeral. I hope we don't get back into that time.

Another thing we ought to consider is that when Americans travel more freely, as they have been able to do under what is called a general license for individual travelers—that was one of the changes that was made in just the past couple of years—then individual American travelers tend to go to Cuba and stay in a bed and breakfast run by a private Cuban citizen, travel in private taxi cabs, frequent a private restaurant. My own family has done that.

If we go back to the time when American travelers have to travel under a specific license or as a group, then those travelers will be pushed toward the Cuban hotels which are owned by the Cuban Government or military. Therefore, you have aided the Cuban Government more than the Cuban people. Under no system will you be able to cut off money completely from the Cuban Government or the private sector. There is leakage everywhere. That is how economies work. Why in the world do we have a policy where we directly benefit the Cuban Government

by pushing American travelers to the hotels they own rather than the private homes owned by private Cuban citizens? It seems to me these policies, if they are going to come forward—and it seems that they might be—just go against the policies and the goals we have.

Another thing we need to consider is that in the old times, when we had more restrictive policies on travel on Americans, those had to be enforced somehow. That falls upon the Office of Foreign Assets Control at Treasury.

OFAC, you may have heard recently, is the office we charge to enforce our sanctions on Iran. We are putting new sanctions on Iran. They will be charged with enforcing those. They will be charged with enforcing sanctions on Russia and new sanctions on Russia as well. Sanctions on North Korea, again, falls to OFAC. Yet we are telling OFAC that now they are going to have to spend a considerable amount of time and resources and manpower tracking down people going to Cuba to see if they stick to their designated, approved itinerary, whatever that might be, whatever we think they ought to be doing there, rather than what they want to be doing there. That just seems foolish to me and a waste of money, time and resources, and wrong-headed priorities with regard to other priorities that we have on sanctions.

We had situations in previous years that would simply be laughable if they weren't true, but I think the administration ought to consider that when we have a restrictive policy on travel, we are going to have situations that are just flat embarrassing to us. If that sounds crazy, it doesn't sound crazy to Joan Slote of San Diego, who traveled to Cuba in the year 2000 at the age of 72 with a Canadian company that organized cycling tours. She was fined \$7,500 in the United States because she hadn't preapproved the itinerary and didn't follow the guidelines. She went through a Canadian company to do that. The subsequent fees totaled nearly \$10,000. I think it was settled for something less, but why in the world are we sanctioning and fining a 72-year-old woman who went on a biking tour in Cuba.

Consider the case of Cevin Allen in the State of Washington. He spent part of his childhood in Cuba, where his parents were missionaries. They built an Assembly of God Church in a town in southeastern Cuba. His parents died in 1987 in a house fire. Ten years later, Allen traveled to Cuba to scatter the ashes of his parents at the church they had built. He also brought a family Bible to give to the church's pastor. Cevin returned to the United States via Nassau, Bahamas, where he told U.S. agents he had just been to Cuba. He told them the reasons for his travel. His initial fine was \$7,500.

Do we really want to be fining people who are scattering the ashes of their parents? These aren't isolated incidents. This went on for a while.

A woman from Indiana was fined for distributing Bibles in Cuba because her itinerary didn't include a trip to the beach. She went to the beach, I am told, to participate or to watch a baptism that was happening at that time. Why in the world would we try to limit that kind of travel? Yet that is what we would be doing if we go back to restricting travel.

Maybe these rumors are overblown. Maybe we will not be imposing new restrictions on travel, but if we are, I hope the administration will consider these things.

There is another rumor out there that we know that if we diminish American travel, therefore diminishing the amount of money that goes to these Cuban entrepreneurs who are running bed and breakfasts and private restaurants, then we can make up for it somehow by having some of our government agencies teach entrepreneurship classes. Anybody who has been in Cuba understands that Cubans who have survived on \$20 a month for decades are more entrepreneurial than we will ever be. They don't need lessons in entrepreneurship, they need customers, and by denying Americans the freedom to travel to Cuba, we will be denying them customers, and they will be worse off. Their political freedom will be diminished. Their economic freedom will be diminished. Their personal freedom will be diminished. That is not what we want.

Obviously, we want the Cuban Government to change. It has been disappointing, the rate of change. Why would we take it out on the Cuban people? Don't they have it tough enough with a Communist government that wants to control and keep that control as long as they can? Why don't we continue to help the Cuban people as they have been helped over the past couple of years? We also want to consider the cooperation we have with the Cuban Government with regard to issues such as drug interdiction, environmental cooperation, immigration enforcement. In the past couple of years, we had a lot of Cubans rafting to South Florida because of the wet foot, dry foot policy. We have had tens of thousands of Cubans crossing the Mexican border to make it to Arizona or Texas or California or New Mexico to claim or to be paroled into our system and ultimately perhaps to get citizenship. Because of agreements we have had and the diplomatic cooperation we have had over the past couple of years, and specifically over the past couple of months, we have been able to reach an agreement where we don't have that kind of migration and those kinds of issues. So there are tangible benefits to the diplomatic cooperation we have had. I am told we are not going to touch that; that we are not going to roll back. We have diplomatic relations and that is a good thing.

We don't want to go back to the time where instead of an embassy, we had a special interests section in Cuba and

the Cubans had one here. I hope the President of the United States and his Cabinet will consider these things as they make decisions on what to do on Cuba. There are changes to policy we can make, but I would argue they would be more in terms of further liberalizing travel. We have a bill that has been filed in the Senate with 55 cosponsors. It is a bipartisan bill to completely lift the travel ban and get rid of it completely. If such a measure is brought to the floor, I am confident there will be between 65 and 70 votes—maybe more—for such a bill. Instead, we seem to be going in the other direction or the administration is talking about going in the other direction. I hope they will reconsider.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, Russia remains a hostile, recalcitrant power that deploys its military, its cyber espionage activities, and its economic tactics to harm the United States of America—to drive a wedge between us and our allies.

President Obama began to impose tough sanctions for Russia's cyber attacks, its cyber intrusion, its illegal annexation of Crimea, and its continuing aggression in Ukraine and Syria. Congress joined in that effort by enacting two measures to tighten and broaden those sanctions. Lifting and relaxing those sanctions now would only reward Russia's attempts to undermine our democracy.

The administration continues to exercise a policy of strategic ambiguity when it comes to Russia, and the President, putting it mildly, has sent mixed signals. Just last month, Gary Cohn, the President's senior economic adviser, seemed to suggest that the United States could relax sanctions on Russia, and, as press reports confirmed 2 weeks ago, in its early days, the Trump administration considered removing all measures against Russia, according to former administration officials. Think of that.

We all hear the discussion—maybe collusion, maybe not—about the Russians' friendship with the administration, whether the Trump family or the Trump businesses or the Trump White House has had some kind of relationships—almost everybody here thinks—with the oilmen, with the oligarchs, with the Kremlin, maybe even Putin himself. And to think that soon after taking office, before the public and the rest of us began to start learning more about Trump's ties with Russia, the administration considered the removal of any kind of measures punishing Russia.

This amendment, written by Senators CRAPO, CORKER, CARDIN, me, and our offices and our staffs, sends an unambiguous message that the United States will not accept Russia's continued aggression, will adopt tough measures to both punish its past actions and deter future aggression against our country and our allies.

Over the last week, the chairs and ranking members of key Senate committees conducted intense negotiations over a package of tough and meaningful reforms and expansions to our current Russia sanctions regime. We have had good, positive, productive, bipartisan conversations. Last night we reached agreement on this broad package of new measures that substantially expands sanctions on Russia in response to its malicious cyber attacks, efforts to undermine democracy, and continuing aggression in Syria and in eastern Ukraine. This package assures Congress and the people we represent that we have more of a say in this critical national security debate.

The amendment would do a number of things. It would codify and strengthen six existing Obama administration Executive orders on Russia and Ukraine and on Russian cyber activities and the sanctions flowing from them.

It would provide for strict congressional review of any effort by the President to relax and suspend and terminate or waive Russian sanctions patterned after the Iran Review Act.

It would require mandatory imposition of sanctions on malicious cyber activity against the United States, on corrupt Russian actors around the world, on foreign sanctions evaders violating the Russia, Ukraine, and cyber-related sanctions controls, on those involved in serious human rights abuses in territories forcibly controlled by Russia, and on special Russian crude oil projects around the world.

It would authorize broad new sanctions on key sectors of Russia's economy, including mining, metals, shipping, and railways, as well as new investments in energy pipelines.

It would crack down on anyone investing in corrupt privatization efforts in Russia—something we have seen a lot of over 20 years.

It would broaden the Treasury Department's authority to impose geographic targeting orders, allowing investigators to obtain ATM and wire transfer records so Treasury can better target illicit activity of Russian oligarchs in the United States.

It would require Treasury to provide Congress with a study on the tangled web of senior government officials from Russia and their family members and any current U.S. economic exposures to Russian oligarchs and their investments, and that includes real estate.

It would require the administration to assess and report to Congress on extending secondary sanctions to additional Russian oligarchs and state-owned and related enterprises.

Since 2014, Congress has worked together—Republicans and Democrats—to craft increasingly tougher sanctions to hold Russia accountable for a long line of misdeeds. It is a long line indeed, from Russia's violations of international law and of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, to its role in the brutal repression in the war in Syria, to the cyber attacks that we are learning more and more about on Americans.

The Ukrainian community in my State—vibrant, successful, progressive—and around the world knows firsthand the dangers of unchecked Russian aggression. We should strengthen—not weaken, not relax, not peel back—Russian sanctions.

I urge my colleagues here and in the House to support this amendment, and I will urge the President to sign it into law. We must continue to vigorously enforce and strengthen sanctions against Russia to send a message to its leaders and the world that the United States of America will not tolerate efforts to undermine democracy around the world.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. President, our democracy is founded on checks and balances—and not just among the branches of government. Our Founders enshrined the freedom of the press in the Bill of Rights for a reason. We can't have a functioning democracy without freedom of the press. That is why last week the Newseum marked its annual Day Without News to remind Americans what our country would be—what we would be like, what we would look like, how we would act—without a free press.

Journalists' entire job is to ask tough questions and to challenge powerful interests. While in church, we comfort the afflicted, journalists afflict the comfortable. Reporters put their safety and far too often their lives on the line, whether it is covering floods and hurricanes at home or traversing the globe to bring us the stories of our troops. We depend on reporters in Ohio and around the world to both bring us the stories that impact our day-to-day lives and to tell the stories that simply otherwise might not be told.

Supporting a vibrant, independent, proactive press corps has rarely been more important in our country. Yet, too often we see reporters restricted, vilified, attacked, and even physically threatened, all for doing the jobs for which they were hired.

Today brought news in this body that some people in this building—some Members of the Senate—are trying to bar reporters from asking Senators questions. This is outrageous. If Senators can't handle tough questions from reporters about their plans to take healthcare away from millions of Americans, maybe they should change the bill, not restrict the reporters.

We remember that Oval Office meeting with Russian officials. We have seen the pictures of the President of

the United States with the Russian Foreign Minister, with the Russian Ambassador. We have seen those pictures, but what we need to remember about those pictures—those photos that ran on front pages around this country and all over the world—those photos weren't taken by American journalists. The President of the United States threw them out of the Oval Office. Those pictures were taken by the Russian state media.

The Russian state media was allowed to be in the room with the President of the United States in the Oval Office—hallowed ground in our democracy—while the American press was thrown out. The Russian state media, the old Soviet news agency, TASS, the remnants of the old Soviet propaganda machine, was allowed in, while the American press was barred. When you hide from the press, you hide from the American people.

On November 16, a group representing more than a dozen journalist organizations sent a letter to the President-elect. They wrote: "This isn't about access for the press itself, it's about access for Americans in diverse communities around the country."

Having a strong, independent White House and congressional press corps isn't just important for those reporters' stories. Think about the signal it sends to mayors and city council members and State legislators. If the Members of Congress—the President, by throwing press out of the Oval Office and bringing in the old Soviet news agency TASS, or the Senate, by throwing reporters out of the Senate—if they don't have to be accountable, why should a mayor, why should a city council person, why should a Governor think they should be accountable?

It is not just Washington reporters who are vital to democracy. It is reporters in Ohio telling us the stories, bringing us the faces of the opioid epidemic that devastates families and communities. It is Ohio's editorial pages highlighting how important the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is to our drinking water and our State's economy. It has enabled Senator PORTMAN and me and bipartisan Senators all over the Great Lakes, from New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota—Senators from both parties fighting back and stopping the cuts that would have destroyed so much of the progress in cleaning up the Great Lakes. It is journalists in every corner of my State highlighting the devastation that the proposed budget would have on our schools and our housing and rural communities. It is emphasizing again that 200,000 Ohioans right now are getting opioid treatment because they have insurance from the Affordable Care Act. It is reminding politicians in Ohio of both parties that those people need insurance. That is what a free press does.

Parenthetically, I would add, my wife is a journalist. She is a Pulitzer Prize

winner. She is a columnist. She is soon to be a novelist. She clearly has outspoken views about this, as I do. She is a member of the press. I am a Member of this body. We both believe in a free press. We both believe in a free democracy.

We answer to journalists in this body because they are the eyes and ears of the people we serve. If you can't understand—if none of us are strong enough and articulate enough and gutsy enough to stand before reporters who ask tough questions about your positions, then maybe you ought to rethink your positions.

We need diligent, courageous reporters to dig up their stories. We need independent editors to put them on front pages. We need media organizations willing to hold the powerful accountable.

The American people have a right to know what is going on in their own government, from the White House down to the city council office.

The behavior today of the Rules Committee—the Rules Committee decision to ban reporters—television reporters specifically—from this body is just reprehensible. Thomas Jefferson said, “Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.” That is as true today as it was more than 200 years ago at the time of our country's founding.

To all of the reporters out there, thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I am glad to be down here with our ranking member, Senator BEN CARDIN from Maryland. I want to thank him and his staff for working until 10:20 last night to complete negotiations on a Russia amendment. I want to thank Senator CRAPO and his staff and Senator BROWN and his staff for the work they did on the sanctions component, where over the last 5 months they have worked with our counterparts around the world to make sure that what we did in this piece of legislation was something that was workable. Truly, I think it has been a great effort by four different offices. I am glad that cloture has been filed on that amendment, and I understand we are going to vote on it tomorrow at 2 o'clock.

I will be very brief. Senator CARDIN and I are here on the floor together, and I know he wants to make some comments about this. Let me just give a brief summary, if I could.

The amendment enhances Congress's role in determining sanctions policy on Russia. It provides for the President to use a national security waiver or sanctions termination after giving Congress 30 days to review the proposed action.

I think everyone here knows I am a strong proponent of congressional review. We began that under President Obama. To me, it gets us in a place where we are playing an appropriate role in foreign policy.

The amendment codifies existing sanctions on Russia for their activities in Ukraine and cyber space.

The amendment strengthens and expands existing conduct-based sanctions by requiring the imposition of sanctions on actors undermining cyber security, supplying arms to Syria, human rights abusers, and those involved in corrupt privatization of government-owned assets.

It mandates sanctions on Russian deep-water, Arctic, and shale projects worldwide and yet allows for waivers to be made based on national security interests of the United States.

This amendment prioritizes U.S. foreign assistance to allies in their fight against Russian aggression. This is something I know Senator CARDIN worked hard on, and I appreciate his efforts.

It authorizes \$250 million to establish the Countering Russian Influence Fund to implement programs in EU and NATO member countries—Senator PORTMAN played a role in this as well, and I appreciate his efforts—as well as candidate nations, to combat Russian interference, with a priority given to programs that develop cyber security, address public corruption, respond to humanitarian crises, counter disinformation, and support democratic institutions.

It requires the State Department and other Federal agencies to collaborate and develop a plan to reduce Ukraine's dependence on Russian energy imports, which we know Russia has used to extort Ukraine.

I think it is a very good piece of legislation. I appreciate the contributions of many Members here. I know Senator MCCAIN, Senator GRAHAM, Senator RUBIO, and so many people here have been involved in wanting to produce legislation that pushes back in this way. We have tried to utilize the best of many bills that have been put forth.

Again, I cannot thank the ranking member and his staff enough for the way they have worked with us to get us to this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I just want to follow up briefly with Chairman CORKER. The two of us became friends in 2007, when we were both elected to the U.S. Senate the same year and were part of the same class. But I think the two of us really became close friends a little over 2 years ago, when we were confronted with how Congress should deal with the nuclear agreement being negotiated by President Obama with Iran and our European friends, along with Russia and China.

As the two of us worked around the clock to try to develop an appropriate review process so that Congress could play a constructive role—we recognize that we are the legislative branch, and we have oversight functions, but there is an appropriate role for us with regard to Executive actions—we came

out with something that no one expected could be done; that is, nearly unanimous support in this body for a review statute in regard to the Iran negotiations.

Chairman CORKER has taken this same template and has now used that to apply to Russia in the removal of sanctions on Russia. It started with a bill that was put together by Senator GRAHAM and me. It has been modified through the negotiations we have had, as Senator CORKER has commented, with Senator BROWN and Senator CRAPO. But it does, in effect, provide that there will be notice to Congress before the administration can give any sanction relief to Russia, so there can be transparency and a discussion and a debate. Then there is a process by which Congress, if we feel strongly and can get the necessary support, can disapprove of sanction relief.

I think that is the proper way for us to deal with one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world—between the United States and Russia—and it is appropriate that it is going to be an amendment to the Iran sanctions bill because the review process came out of the Iran agreement.

The review process would be triggered if there is action taken by the President to give relief, but the legislation also includes additional sanctions, as the chairman pointed out, with Russia. It does this in a way that codifies the President's Executive orders so that there is now congressional support for Executive orders. It expands those sanctions in the area of cyber, as the chairman pointed out, and for energy projects, financial institutions facilitating transactions, Russian arms and related materiel to Syria, the corrupt privatization of government-owned assets.

I particularly thank the chairman for the way he was able to recognize that, in Russia, what we don't want to see us contribute to is corruption, and we concentrate on the corruption issue, not the business issue. It is the area of corruption that becomes the important thing.

We tighten up a lot of the different sanctions. Then we set up a process where there needs to be certified progress made; otherwise, these are mandatory sanctions the President must impose.

As the chairman pointed out, negotiations included aspects of legislation that was first introduced by Senator MCCAIN and me on sanctions, by Senator GRAHAM and me on review of sanction relief, by Senators CRAPO and BROWN on proposed legislation dealing with sanctions, and Chairman CORKER had significant drafting issues that he brought to the table in our negotiations. So it was a free discussion, and the end result is—I said this before but I want to underscore this—the Banking Committee brought some very helpful suggestions to make sure the financial sanctions worked. It is one thing that we want to make sure there are penalties, but we have to make sure they

work right, and I compliment the work of the Banking Committee in making sure that we use the right standards and that this will meet international muster. It is absolutely essential that this template be one in which our European allies can follow our leadership. If we didn't do that, we could have been isolated, which would not have had the same impact as I think these sanctions will have in working with our European allies.

The chairman mentioned several of our colleagues on the committee. I need to mention Senator SHAHEEN and Senator MENENDEZ, who played very, very important roles in our caucus. Senator DURBIN and Senator SCHUMER also played roles in this, and I acknowledge their contributions.

Included in this bill is the democracy initiative, which deals with providing more unified support with our allies in Europe in fighting Russia's propaganda and attacks on our democratic institutions. Senator PORTMAN made major contributions to that, as the chairman has also acknowledged, and then, brought to us mainly through the Banking bill, we have a strategy to trace terrorism and financing in terrorism, which I think is very important to be included in the amendment.

We will have a chance to vote on this amendment at 2 o'clock tomorrow. I encourage my colleagues to adopt this. Senator CORKER and I expect to be back on the floor tomorrow as we manage the underlying bill, at which time I will want to comment on the importance of our passing the Iran sanctions bill, which is vitally important because of Iranian activities taking place today.

For all of those reasons, I encourage my colleagues to please read the amendment that has been filed in a bipartisan effort to deal with this challenge that Russia has provided through their activities in attacking our democratic institutions, in their continued aggression in Ukraine, and their human rights violations in Syria.

I might add that Senator MENENDEZ's provisions on human rights sanctions are included in this amendment. It really does, I think, capture the essence of the broad consensus of the U.S. Senate and is worthy of our support.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank my friend for his comments. Again, I wish to reiterate that the Banking staff, Senator CRAPO and his staff, and Senator BROWN and his staff did an outstanding job of focusing on sanctions that would work in the appropriate way, as was just laid out, and really brought out the best of the two committees to come up with the legislation that we have.

I hope we will have a very strong vote tomorrow. I think this very much supports U.S. foreign policy. I look forward to that taking place tomorrow at 2 o'clock.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues, Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN, for their fine work on the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act, of course, and then this Russia amendment that so many of us have been pushing for so long. I especially thank Senator CARDIN for his leadership on that, as well as Senator BROWN and Senator CRAPO—and the work that Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER did, as well as a lot of members of the Foreign Relations Committee, who care a lot about this.

As I look at this, I look first at the Iranian part of the underlying bill. We have had many disagreements in the last few years on the Iranian nuclear agreement, but it is now critical. This is the time for those who opposed the agreement and those who supported it to come together to ensure that all of the parties to the agreement are upholding their obligations.

When the United States and our allies agreed to the Iranian nuclear agreement, we made it clear that we will continue to hold Iran accountable for its nefarious activities outside of the four corners of the agreement. We must hold Iran accountable for missile tests, for financing terrorism, and human rights violations. That is our job, and that is why I was an early cosponsor of the legislation before the Senate today.

The Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017 imposes mandatory sanctions on those involved with Iran's ballistic missile program, as well as those who fund terrorist organizations and commit human rights violations. Iran's ballistic missile program is a threat to regional and global security, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 makes it illegal for Iran to develop ballistic missiles that could carry a nuclear weapon. Any person or business involved in helping Iran obtain illegal weapons should be banned from doing business with the United States, have their assets immediately frozen, and their travel restricted.

Minimizing the threat Iran poses also means holding it accountable for funding terrorist groups that threaten Israel and seek to destabilize the region. We should be doing everything in our power to better track terrorist financing so we can stop the flow of money that funds suicide bombers and illicit weapons.

Our mission here is clear: We must protect our own citizens and our allies by enacting strong legislation to ensure that Iran does not cheat on its international commitment. Iran must know that if it violates the rules, it will be held accountable.

Democrats and Republicans have come together to get this done, and it is my hope that we can pass the legislation this week, including the amendment imposing strong sanctions against Russia, which is essential to

protecting our democracy from foreign interference.

Seventeen United States intelligence agencies have confirmed that Russia tried to interfere in the 2016 election. That is not all. We know Russia is using covert cyber attacks, espionage, and harmful propaganda to try to undermine our democracy. They launched cyber attacks against local election systems, a U.S. voting systems software company, and the emails of more than 100 local election officials. Russian-backed criminals hacked into Yahoo and stole data from 500 million accounts. They repeatedly harassed American diplomats in Moscow.

The former Director of Intelligence, James Clapper, recently testified that Russia will continue to interfere in our political system. This is what he said:

I believe [Russia is] now emboldened to continue such activities in the future both here and around the world and to do so even more intensely. If there has ever been a clarion call for vigilance and action against a threat to the very foundation of our democratic political system, this episode is it.

Vigilance—that is what we need right now. That is why I joined a bipartisan group of my colleagues to introduce the Countering Russian Hostilities Act, legislation that would impose strong sanctions against Russia. These sanctions would address Russia's cyber attacks, its human rights violations, and its illegal annexation of land in Ukraine and Georgia.

I am also the cosponsor of the Russia Sanctions Review Act, bipartisan legislation that would require congressional review if sanctions against Russia are rolled back.

The Russia sanctions amendment offered today contains essential portions of both of these pieces of legislation.

After those 17 intelligence agencies confirmed that Russia interfered in our elections, President Obama enacted important sanctions against officials in the Russian Government and hackers conducting malicious cyber activity on behalf of the Russian Government. The amendment before us today would codify those sanctions. The amendment also strengthens sanctions against Russia's energy sector, corrupt Russian officials, and those who supply weapons to the Assad regime.

The day the Obama administration was imposing these additional sanctions on Russia, I was actually with Senators MCCAIN and GRAHAM in Eastern Europe. The goal of our trip was to reinforce support for NATO and our allies in the face of increased Russian aggression. On the trip, we went to the Baltics, Ukraine, and Georgia, countries on the frontlines of these fights. They know Russia's playbook well.

In our meetings with Presidents and Prime Ministers of these countries, it was increasingly evident that if we don't stop Russia now, cyber attacks against governments, political parties, newspapers, and companies will only get worse. We heard about websites being shut down and internet access

limited when one government—the Government of Estonia—simply had the audacity to move a bronze statue from a public square to a cemetery. It was of a Russian fighter. The Russian Government didn't like it, so they cut down their internet access.

Also, there were members of the Ukrainian Parliament who were invited to Lithuania. What happened to the Lithuanians in the Parliament? They were hacked into. Ukraine itself was targeted by Russian hackers more than 6,500 times over a 2-month period.

Most recently, Russia tried to undermine elections in France.

For years, our allies have been subjected to Russian aggression and invasion. But they are undeterred, unwilling to give up on that which they fought so hard for—*independence, freedom, democracy.*

So this is not just about defending our own democracy, as we look at these Russia sanctions that are before us today, as we look at the investigation that is ongoing and looking into the interference into our election. It is about defending a democratic way of life and democracies across the world. It is not just about the simple word “election” or the simple word “democracy.” It is not just about one candidate or one political party. As Senator RUBIO has noted, the next time it will be the other party.

No, this is about our Constitution. It is about our own independence from foreign powers. It is about freedom and the rights guaranteed to us in our own Constitution. If that is undermined, if foreign governments are allowed to come in and handpick who their candidate is based on either propaganda or cyber attacks, then we lose our constitutional rights because we the people are no longer determining who our representatives are. Other countries are.

The world continues to look to America for our steadfast leadership. The United States—a beacon for freedom and democracy—must continue to stand up against Russian aggression, not just in word but in deed. That is why it is so important that the Senate is coming together today to pass strong sanctions against the Russian Government. We want the Russian people to be able to have a democracy. We want them to be able to have a democracy that doesn't do things like bring down planes in Ukraine, that doesn't do things like try to influence other countries' elections. That is why these sanctions are so important.

We know that the Russian Government today is actively working to undermine our democracy and hurt American businesses. This is part of the cyber war. We know that this unprecedented interference has been orchestrated by the Kremlin so that Americans actually lose faith in our own political system. Over time, Russia has grown more determined in its effort to weaken democracies in its expanded sphere of influence. Now, more than

ever, Americans are looking to the Senate for leadership. We must stand strong and united so that Russia and other nations know that attacks against our democracy must not go unchecked. The amendment before us on the sanctions is an important step in doing just that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

U.S.-MEXICO SUGAR AGREEMENT

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to express my considerable disappointment with the U.S.-Mexico sugar agreement that was announced just last week. This deal was concluded recently. The fact is that this is a bad deal for the United States. I am completely mystified as to why our Commerce Department would agree to it. It is a bad deal for U.S. consumers, and we are all consumers. It is a bad deal for American workers.

It completely fails to address the high price of sugar that we have in America today. In fact, it makes the problem worse. It increases the price that we all have to pay for sugar. It reduces choices for consumers, and it absolutely threatens jobs in the many food-producing industries that we have across our country. What it does is that it continues the protectionist policies that favor a handful of big sugar producers and refiners.

These are large, agribusiness companies, generally, already subsidized by domestic agricultural policies that force American consumers to pay artificially inflated prices for their products. It also limits imports, and the fact is that the agreement should be doing just the opposite. It should be giving us a free market in sugar so that American consumers can shop for the best deal available in the world, and that is exactly what it does not do.

Unfortunately, what they did at the Commerce Department is they failed to prioritize the concerns of ordinary American consumers, ordinary American workers. The fact is that the United States is a significant net importer of sugar. We are a huge country, and we don't produce as much sugar as we consume. So we import the difference. Mexico happens to be the No. 1 source of imported sugar. We get about 35 percent of our imported sugar from Mexico. The NAFTA trade agreement provided for free trade in sugar. It took a long time to get there, but it contemplated an arrangement where Mexico could sell to American consumers—like my wife, when she goes shopping at the store, and all of our families—without duties, without tariffs, without taxes, without obstacles.

But that didn't work out so well for some of the sugar producers. So they

went to court, and they accused Mexico of dumping sugar.

In order to avoid tariffs, the Mexican Government agreed to what they call the suspension agreement. It is an agreement that basically sets a minimum price.

So that is what we do. That is our sugar policy. The government dictates it, essentially, in conjunction with foreign governments. It is the American Government that has all the leverage here. We set prices. We fix prices. We don't have a free market. We establish, by central government fiat, what the price will be.

We also establish import quotas. We decide how much of foreign sugar an American will be permitted to buy, reminiscent of “Moscow on the Mississippi.” This is not how you have a free market that allows consumers to have the choices and the benefits from lower competition.

I was concerned about where this negotiation was heading. So Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Democratic Senator from New Hampshire, and I sent a letter to Commerce Secretary Ross to urge him to consider the impact on consumers—which is all of us, I will reiterate—in negotiating this deal. There was a similar letter from House Members. Unfortunately, it apparently did not persuade our Commerce Department. In fact, this new agreement—as I think I mentioned—leaves us with a policy that is worse than it was before. This new so-called suspension agreement increases the already-inflated price of sugar—2 percent higher for raw sugar and 8 percent higher for refined sugar if it is imported from Mexico.

How does it help the 320 million Americans? How does it help ordinary Americans to be forced to pay more for the sugar that we all have to buy? It is a staple in our food. The answer is that it doesn't help. It hurts the single mom who is going to the grocery store to buy cereal for her kids when she has to pay approximately twice the price of the global price for sugar. Where does that money go? It goes straight out of her pocket and straight into the pockets of this handful of wealthy sugar producers in America. So it is absolutely bad policy for American consumers.

Make no mistake about it. Higher prices for Mexican sugar mean higher prices for American consumers—all of us. The Coalition for Sugar Reform estimates that the new agreement—just the new agreement—will cost U.S. consumers an additional billion dollars a year. That goes straight to the growers, the producers. As I said, U.S. sugar prices are already almost double the world prices, generally, because of the ridiculous agricultural policy we have with respect to sugar. The American Enterprise Institute reports that they believe that the current policy already costs U.S. consumers \$3 billion a year. So you have the \$3 billion a year from this flawed policy we used to have. Now we just added another billion dollars a

year in costs to our consumers by virtue of this suspension agreement. What the Commerce Department should be doing in these contexts is described as to reduce and eliminate this mandatory price fixing, eliminate these barriers to trade, and put U.S. consumers as the first priority.

I will point out that it is not only Americans as consumers who are harmed by this, but it is also Americans as workers. There are industries that use sugar as a component in their food products. My State of Pennsylvania, in particular, has a lot of these companies—200 confectioners. We have the most in any State. Our sugar-using industries employ nearly 40,000 workers across our Commonwealth. We have 600,000 workers across the country in the various food and beverage industries that make products that we all consume that use sugar. Guess what. Higher sugar prices jeopardize those well-paying food manufacturing jobs. About 120,000 such jobs have been lost over the last 2 decades because what happens is that American food producers just can't compete. American food producers are forced to buy artificially expensive sugar. Their foreign competitors don't have to do that. Their foreign competitors can buy sugar on the world market at about half the price. So guess what? An American candy maker or cereal maker or other food maker is at a huge competitive disadvantage. We have been losing them, in part, because we force them to pay these artificially high prices.

Our own Commerce Department—the very same Commerce Department that negotiated this deal—did a study. This is their work, not mine. They estimate that when you artificially prop up the price of sugar, you might save some jobs in the sugar-growing industry, but for every job you save there, you lose three jobs in the food processing and manufacturing industry—in the sugar consumption industry. What a terrible trade. What a terrible arrangement.

I am very disappointed to learn about this. The Commerce Department clearly failed to negotiate an agreement that would put consumers first and consumers' pocketbooks first. Instead, we have increased prices above the already artificially high levels. We have restrictions on sugar trade, and, apparently, we have decided to pursue protectionist policies that advance the interests of a small handful of wealthy growers at the expense of several hundred million American consumers. This strikes me as crony capitalism, and it is a huge mistake.

I hope that this is not a sign of what is to come in trade negotiations. We are told that the administration is going to be reevaluating and renegotiating various agreements, including NAFTA and others. As they are being reconsidered, I hope we will not go down this protectionist road of favoring a handful of the privileged few at the expense of the many, as we apparently did in this agreement.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, however loud, persistent, and powerful the climate denial operation has been, we have to remember that it has always been built on lies. It is a huge fortress of lies stacked upon lies—lies about the science, lies about the scientists, lies about doubt, lies about costs, lies through phony front groups, and lies about where the money comes from and who is pulling the strings.

This fortress of lies protects a subsidy to the fossil fuel industry that the International Monetary Fund puts at \$700 billion per year. For big, big money, you can do big, big lies, and they do. These have been the biggest lies of our generation. But to paraphrase the great reggae singer Jimmy Cliff: "The bigger you lie, the harder you fall." To paraphrase the "Game of Thrones," "The fall is coming." In the last few weeks, there has been news that has shaken this fortress of lies and moves us toward that fall. Shareholders are rising up.

For as long as there have been shareholder resolutions to fossil fuel companies about climate change, there has been resolute opposition from management to every vote. Hundreds of shareholder resolutions went down to defeat until now.

Occidental Petroleum shareholders last month won the first victory against management, and a week later mighty ExxonMobil was defeated by its shareholders. This new reporting that shareholders have demanded will help clear away the lies. The fall is coming.

There are even lies within the lies. To fend off this latest shareholder resolution to try to make the company look less irresponsible, ExxonMobil's CEO repeated the company's claim that it knows climate change is real and supports a carbon fee—but it doesn't.

As everyone in this building knows, ExxonMobil maintains a massive lobbying apparatus in Washington, and that massive apparatus is and always has been resolutely opposed to any such thing as a carbon fee or any serious climate action whatsoever, for that matter, unless maybe ExxonMobil doesn't know what its own vast lobbying apparatus is doing. Maybe ExxonMobil spends that enormous amount of money to exert its influence in Washington to stop any climate action, and the CEO is unaware of that going on. I doubt that. You be the judge of whether that is credible.

It is not just shareholders rising up; attorneys general are starting to win. The attorney general of New York has just filed pleadings in State court in New York asserting that ExxonMobil's

climate reporting has been a "sham"—to use the word from his filing; that, in the oldest of accounting tricks, ExxonMobil kept two sets of books assessing carbon pollution risk. After fierce opposition by ExxonMobil lawyers using every trick in the book to delay and snarl the New York attorney general, it looks now as if ExxonMobil may have lied to its investors and its shareholders. If ExxonMobil has lied to its shareholders, that is a violation of law, and that fall comes hard indeed.

Secretary of State Tillerson evidently knew of and approved the two sets of carbon pollution books when he was CEO of ExxonMobil. We will see where this goes, but of all the people around Trump who might be indicted, now we might add the Secretary of State.

The Attorney General of Massachusetts is also pursuing ExxonMobil against equally fierce tactics by ExxonMobil lawyers. To try to get away from the Massachusetts attorney general, the lawyers even went so far as to claim—get this—that ExxonMobil was not doing business in Massachusetts; that it didn't have the minimum contacts with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts necessary for the State even to assert jurisdiction. Well, the judge virtually laughed that argument out of court, but it shows how desperate ExxonMobil must be feeling as it tries to wriggle away from having to answer questions under oath.

Nothing turns a big lie into a hard fall better than having to put that right hand up and give truthful testimony and face cross-examination under penalty of perjury.

Will the Securities and Exchange Commission take a look at this sham reporting, too, or has the Federal government, under Trump, degenerated into such a fossil fuel banana republic that no Federal agency will do its job against that industry or might it even chime in on the side of industry Pruitt-style?

Do you remember the question of whether the fossil fuel climate denial operation merits investigation under Federal civil racketeering laws? The tobacco industry was sued under Federal civil racketeering laws by the U.S. Department of Justice so there is a model. You may remember that the question as to the fossil fuel climate denial operation was referred by Attorney General Lynch to the FBI—or so she testified.

One wonders, did the FBI ever take an honest look? What was the outcome? Was there ever a report? Are they still looking at it?

Remember that the Department of Justice won its civil racketeering case against the tobacco industry, they won it at trial, and they won again on appeal. The woman who won that case for the Department of Justice, the lead trial attorney for the Department, has said publicly that this climate denial operation also merits investigation as fraud. That would seem to be a knowledgeable opinion from the woman who

won the last case, an opinion perhaps worth heeding, but did anything happen? Will anything happen?

Forget too big to fail or too big to jail. Is the power of the fossil fuel industry now so great that it is too big even to investigate, even by the Department of Justice? Does it now take State attorneys general to do the job because the Federal government is so owned now by the fossil fuel industry?

Think about it. What if the FBI reported to the Attorney General that there was a meritorious fraud case arising out of all the lies propping up climate denial? Who believes Attorney General Sessions would allow that case to go forward against his party's biggest backer?

Well, the bigger the lie, ultimately, the harder the fall. One way or the other, this fact remains constant and true. There always will come a day of reckoning. With these shareholder victories and with these attorneys general victories, that day of reckoning is closing in—the day when they have to put that right hand up and testify truthfully and under oath, not just send out spin through front groups and operatives but testify truthfully under penalty of perjury.

It is long overdue for truth to have its day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

AMENDMENT NO. 232, AS MODIFIED

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin Countering Russian Aggression and Cyber Attacks Act of 2017. This bill, filed as an amendment, was filed as amendment No. 232 to the Iran sanctions bill late last night.

Yesterday, the Senate Banking and Foreign Relations Committees concluded their work on a groundbreaking piece of legislation regarding Russia sanctions. I say groundbreaking because the legislation not only ratchets up pressure against the Russian Federation for its illegal invasion and annexation of Crimea, continuing escalation of violence in eastern Ukraine, and its cyber activities against businesses and citizens of the United States, but it also, importantly, provides Congress with a strong oversight process over almost any termination or suspension of these sanctions.

Senators CORKER, BROWN, CARDIN, and their staffs spent many hours to ensure that we put together a thoughtful and measured product, and I thank them for their work.

Senator BROWN and I have worked together for months to try to craft a responsible Russia sanctions package, and Senator CORKER has been a tireless champion of this measure as has Senator CARDIN. I also would be remiss if I did not recognize the work of Senators MCCAIN, BROWN, SHAHEEN, and the many others who have worked to develop much of what has ended up in this legislation. All of us appreciate the leadership of Majority Leader

MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER, who worked with us as we came to our final agreement.

The need for this legislation was underlined by the fact that many Americans have deep concerns about Russia's behavior over the past few years. Since coming to power, Russian President Putin has become increasingly belligerent, nationalistic, and autocratic.

Currently, the United States has imposed sanctions on Russia for Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and its role in supporting the separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, Russia's increasing cyber attacks and cyber espionage against the United States, Russia's support for the Assad regime in Syria, and Russia's complicity for corruption.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, it demonstrates the lengths to which Russia will go to seize power and influence in the international arena.

Unfortunately, Putin's desire to increase Russia's political influence is not driven by a desire to raise the standard of living for Russians. Instead, it is driven by a craving to enrich and empower himself and his cronies.

Over the course of the past 3 months, the Senate Banking Committee has held hearings assessing the impacts of the current sanctions regime against Russia. We examined the existing Russian sanctions architecture in terms of its effectiveness and its economic impact. The Russians have largely learned to live within the economic confines of the existing sanctions regime.

In Putin's calculation, the cost of the sanctions do not outweigh the benefits of occupying Crimea and contributing to unrest in Ukraine, to continuing to support the Assad regime's assault on civilians in Syria, and conducting cyber attacks on people, companies, and institutions around the globe.

Many of us on both sides of the aisle feel the United States needs to be much stronger in its response. Americans want to see the United States stand firm in the defense of our long-held values, which include respect for territorial integrity, human rights, and liberty.

At this point, the only way to change Putin's cost-benefit analysis is to increase the pressure which we apply directly through sanctions.

The Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin amendment is an effective way to increase the pressure on Russia for its irresponsible conduct. Our legislation signals to the world the unflinching commitment of the United States to the sanctity of territorial integrity, human rights, and good governance. Our amendment also demonstrates our resolve in responding to cyber attacks against U.S. citizens and entities and against our allies.

In summary, the Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin amendment does four things: It escalates and expands the current sanctions regime against Rus-

sia; it creates new sanctions against Russia; it engages Congress at a higher level than before by providing a mechanism for Congress to vote before lifting any sanctions on Russia; and it increases the Treasury Department's ability to track illicit finance, including illicit flows linked to Russia.

We escalate and expand the current sanctions regime against Russia by codifying and modifying six current Executive orders. Four of these orders relate to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and two relate to Russia's malicious cyber activity.

We expand the sanctions under the Ukraine-related Executive orders to reach Russian deep-water, Arctic, and shale projects worldwide. We also permit the President to apply these sanctions to Russian railway, shipping, and metals and mining sectors.

The amendment also creates several new sanctions against Russia. There are new sanctions for those who are engaged in significant activities undermining cyber security. These sanctions also apply to those providing material support for such malicious cyber actors.

We also impose mandatory sanctions on entities engaged in special Russian energy projects and on foreign financial institutions facilitating transactions in response to Russia's continued aggression in Ukraine.

The amendment includes tough sanctions on Russian Government officials, their relatives, and close associates responsible for significant corruption in Russia or elsewhere.

It sanctions people who help others evade sanctions and people responsible for human rights violations in any territory controlled by Russia.

Additionally, it sanctions those who work for or on behalf of the Russian defense and intelligence sectors, those who invest or support the construction of Russian energy export pipelines, and corrupt government officials who enrich themselves after making deals to privatize state-owned assets.

Finally, it sanctions those who help the Assad regime acquire chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons technology, ballistic or cruise missile capabilities, or destabilizing numbers and types of advanced conventional weapons.

The Crapo-Brown-Corker-Cardin amendment will result in some very powerful new sanctions on Russia. Part of our agreement includes congressional review language to ensure Congress exerts proper oversight on the use of these powerful sanctions. We require the President to notify Congress when imposing certain types of sanctions, and we will have the opportunity to review any attempts to lift sanctions with regard to Russia. We intend to use this review model on all sanctions regimes moving forward, and I intend to work to apply it to sanctions on Iran.

Amendment No. 232 is more than just the sanctions and congressional review;

this legislation also includes important counterterrorism financing provisions adopted by the House and Senate during the 114th Congress. It requires the creation of a national strategy for combatting the financing of terrorism and related forms of illicit finance. This strategy ensures that the United States pursues a coordinated and effective fight against illicit finance at all levels of the Russian Government.

Our measure requires the strategy to enhance public-private partnerships to prevent and detect illicit finance. The measure also requires the Treasury Department to report on its efforts to identify illicit finance flows linked to Russia affecting the U.S. financial system or the financial system of our allies. We must engage all of our allies, particularly our trading partners, to work with us so that we achieve our objectives without collateral damage, which is so often the case. It is important that our trading partners be with us on this issue rather than being the victims of the actions we take.

This is a strong bipartisan measure that in important respects represents the next step forward. Of course, this will not be the last step if Russia does not begin to demonstrate verifiable steps toward reducing its course of aggression on multiple fronts. Make no mistake—the sanctions currently in place and those submitted in our amendment last night are Putin's fault and not a result of Putin's confused notions of Russian power and pride.

Even though unilateral actions are not the best option, America must lead on this issue and encourage others to follow since the most successful sanctions result from a united front of United States and European Union cooperation.

Since the unlawful annexation of Crimea, the years of destabilizing eastern Ukraine through relentless war, the global spread of cyber intrusions, and Putin's indefensible support of Assad's leadership of Syria, particularly in light of its recent chemical attack, fewer are left in Europe to defend Putin's policies. The times call for clarity of purpose and a correct amount of pressure. We have that in this amendment.

Again, thank you to Senators CORKER, BROWN, and CARDIN for your hard work and support and to each of the other Senators from both sides of the aisle who have worked to help develop and pursue the policies adopted in this legislation. Thank you to Leader MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER for all of your help and support.

I look forward to passing this measure in short order, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bipartisan amendment.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, today, I speak in favor of the Iran sanctions bill. I am an original cosponsor of the bill, so it should come as no surprise that I support it. My only concern is that we did not pass it sooner.

As I stand here today, I cannot help but feel that this moment highlights the folly of the last 8 years of President Obama's foreign policy. For 8 years, President Obama did everything he could to curry favor with the Ayatollahs in Tehran. He ignored popular protests, known as the Green Movement, and the thousands of Iranians who cried out for something more than sham elections. He lectured our Gulf Arab allies on the need to "share" the Middle East with their sworn enemy in some kind of cold peace. He insisted on putting daylight between us and our friend Israel. He dallied and dithered as the regime helped its client Bashar al-Assad help tear apart his own country in a brutal civil war. Most infamously, he traded away billions of dollars in sanctions relief for a flimsy, one-sided nuclear deal—a deal that did not prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon so much as ultimately guarantee it in just a few years.

What do we have to show for all of this? What did we get for looking the other way for 8 years? Not a more reasonable Iran, not a more open, tolerant, democratic Iran, not a friendlier Iran, but an emboldened Iran—one that continues to launch ballistic missiles in willful defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions. For everything we have done to mollify the ayatollahs and their sensitivities, they have gone out of their way to inflame ours. What did President Obama do? Nothing but appease them.

But we should not lay these failures solely on the last President's doorstep, because he represents a mindset that is too widely shared. It is one that sees Iran's obvious imperial aggression in the Middle East and yet still considers America the aggressor. It is one that tries to compartmentalize and haggle with a regime whose leaders shout "death to Israel" and "death to America" virtually every Friday. It is one that refuses to call a spade a spade and say to the Ayatollahs that enough is enough.

But today we are changing course—and not a moment too soon. This legislation will finally hold the regime and Tehran accountable for their brazen attempts to bully their neighbors and assert supremacy throughout the Middle East. It will put heavy sanctions on anyone who is involved in helping Iran develop ballistic missiles, circumvent our arms embargo, or spread terrorism throughout the world.

I know there are those who consider this kind of a move to be provocative, but I would say that it is the Iranian

regime's aggression that has been provocative. All of these sanctioned activities are things that the regime and Tehran should not be doing in the first place. I do not think it is provocative to hold our enemies to the same standards as our friends. I do not think it is unreasonable to do what we can to protect our friends and ourselves from Iranian-supported terrorism and from a regime that is responsible for killing hundreds of American troops in the Middle East. Instead, I think it is long overdue.

Today, I am glad to see the Senate finally prepared to rectify these grave mistakes.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REAUTHORIZING THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the bipartisan legislation that will reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program. I wish to speak a little bit about flood insurance first before I talk about our much needed legislation.

As most people know—but unfortunately some folks don't know or maybe they forget—if you have homeowners insurance on your home and you have a flood, you are not covered. Homeowners insurance does not cover flooding. In order to be covered for flooding, you have to have a separate policy, and about the only place you can go to get flood insurance is from the Federal program—the National Flood Insurance Program. Now, that is a bit of an overstatement. It is possible to buy flood insurance from a private insurer—and certainly we want to encourage private insurers to participate more in the flood insurance market—but today, for the most part, if you want to carry flood insurance, you have to get it through the Federal program, and that is called the National Flood Insurance Program. It is administered by FEMA.

It is hard to overstate the importance of flood insurance to the American people. It is even harder to overstate the importance of flood insurance to the people of Louisiana. The gross domestic product in my State is about \$220 billion to \$230 billion a year. If you add up all the goods and services that we as Louisianians produce every year, it comes out to between \$220 billion and \$230 billion. Without flood insurance, you can cut that figure in half. We would have to, in effect, turn out the lights.

There are 450,000 flood insurance policies in my State. Many of those people have to have flood insurance; it is a condition of their mortgage. So the

Flood insurance program and, more specifically, the National Flood Insurance Program, is extraordinarily important to America, but it is even more extraordinarily important to the people of Louisiana.

We are introducing a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program. The current program expires in September. If we don't reauthorize it, most Americans who have flood insurance at the present time will no longer be able to access it. It is critical that the U.S. Congress act and act immediately.

The bill we are introducing—and I will explain in a moment whom I mean by “we”—is bipartisan legislation.

Now, there are a lot of issues that divide Congress today, and reasonable people are entitled to disagree over some of these very difficult issues, but there are also issues we can come together on, and I respectfully suggest that flood insurance is one of them.

We have put together a bipartisan coalition, including Senator BOB MENENDEZ from New Jersey, who happens to be a Democrat; and Senator CORY BOOKER from New Jersey, who happens to be a Democrat; Senator THAD COCHRAN, chairman of our Appropriations Committee in the Senate, from Mississippi, who is a Republican; Senator MARCO RUBIO from Florida, who is a Republican; Senator BILL NELSON from Florida, who is a Democrat; Senator VAN HOLLEN from Maryland, who happens to be a Democrat; and more Senators are coming on board.

We are introducing a bill called the SAFE National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. SAFE, of course, is an acronym. It refers to sustainable, affordable, fair, and efficient—SAFE—the SAFE National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act.

Let me briefly tell my colleagues what it does. I will start with cost. It doesn't do a bit of good to offer someone insurance if they can't afford it, and too many times that has been the case with flood insurance. Right now, under the current program, the National Flood Insurance Program is allowed to raise a homeowner's flood insurance premium by 18 percent—not 10 percent, not 12 percent but by a staggering 18 percent—and to do that every year. If you are insuring a second home—let's suppose you have a vacation home—or if you are a businesswoman or a businessman and insuring a commercial establishment, the national program can raise your premiums every year by 25 percent. Nobody can pay those kinds of increases.

No. 1, our bill would cap the amount the Flood Insurance Program can raise someone's premium at 10 percent annually. I wish we could tap it at zero percent annually, but 10 percent is certainly a lot better for our people than 18 percent and 25 percent, respectively. If FEMA properly implements some other provisions of our act, which I will talk about in a moment, there will not be any increases.

No. 2, our bill, the SAFE National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act, would extend the National Flood Insurance Program by 6 years. I wish we could extend it longer. I wish we could do 10 years or 15 years or 20 years, but it is necessary for us, as the Presiding Officer knows, to get unified, bipartisan support on this legislation, and we think 6 years—a 6-year authorization is probably the best we can do to pass this bill.

No. 3, our bill will save about \$750 million a year. Let me say that again. Our bill will save about \$750 million each and every year to be used in the Flood Insurance Program. Here is how our legislation would do it.

First, as we know, the Flood Insurance Program has a deficit. We have had a large number of natural disasters, including floods, over the past several years in our country, unfortunately. We had Hurricane Sandy. We had Hurricane Katrina. In my State in Louisiana, last year we had two horrible floods, both in the northern part of my State and in the southern part of my State. In a couple of instances, we had 23 inches of rain in 2 days. I don't care if you live on Mount Everest, if you get 23 inches of rain in 2 days, you are going to flood. Those floods were very expensive.

Those catastrophes and many others caused the National Flood Insurance Program to operate at a deficit. The deficit is \$25 billion. Another way of stating that is, the program owes \$25 billion in debt, but we owe it to ourselves. We don't owe it to a bank, we don't owe it to a foreign country, we don't owe it to any private entity; we owe it to ourselves, and we have been paying interest to ourselves out of the premiums—the cashflow, if you will—of the Flood Insurance Program every year. That 10 percent—10 cents out of every dollar that comes into the National Flood Insurance Program—is devoted to just paying the interest on this debt that we owe ourselves.

Our bill would suspend those interest payments for 6 years. That will free up about \$400 million a year.

We are also saving money by asking those who work with us in implementing the National Flood Insurance Program to sharpen their pencils. Let me explain what I mean by that. FEMA is in charge of the National Flood Insurance Program, but FEMA doesn't run the program. It doesn't run the insurance company that administers the policies. FEMA hires private insurers in the private sector to actually run the program. We call that the “write your own” program.

For the most part, those private insurers that administer the program do a good job, but they don't have any risk. They have zero risk, none, nada. The risk is on the National Flood Insurance Program—the Federal government—and therefore the American taxpayer. We just hire the private insurers to administer the program—to collect the premiums, to sell the policies, to

adjust the claims. So they have no risk. Yet we are paying them 31 cents out of every dollar that the program would take in.

Our bill respectfully suggests that is too much money. While we appreciate the cooperation we get and the good work we get from the private insurers who help us administer this program, we are going to ask them—actually, we are going to tell them—to reduce their compensation from 31 cents out of every dollar. That is going to save about \$350 million a year. So we just saved about \$750 million a year for the National Flood Insurance Program.

What are we going to do with the money? First, mitigation. With flooding—and it is inevitable that we are going to have floods. I don't know why bad things happen to good people, but they do. You can pay a little bit up front or you can pay a whole lot later, and this is what I mean by that.

If we spend the money on mitigation to protect against the flooding that we know will inevitably happen, we will save money for the American taxpayer in the long run, and we will use a portion of that \$750 million in savings to mitigate against flood risk. By mitigation, I mean offering low- or no-interest loans to homeowners to elevate their homes so they will not flood—building levees, building flood walls. Our bill does not say specifically what mitigation measures should be taken, and it does not say which mitigation projects will be built, but it does say that mitigation is the answer, not the complete answer but part of the answer. We haven't done enough of it. Now we are going to have the resources to do it.

The second way we are going to use that money is to try to do a better job with maps. We set rates in the National Flood Insurance Program based on the likelihood that someone will be flooded. We determine that likelihood by using maps drawn by experts using computer models. We are not using the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art technology to draw those maps, but if our bill passes, we will, including but not limited to a new technology called LIDAR. I confess, I don't understand the technology, but it is called LIDAR, Light Detection and Ranging technology. It can be used to draw more accurate flood maps to more accurately assess someone's propensity to flood.

Why is that important? You might be in a high-risk flood zone right now and paying a large premium. With state-of-the-art technology, you may be put into a lower risk flood zone and pay less. I am not guaranteeing that result, but it is certainly possible. In any event, we need to as accurately as possible assess the risk, and the only way to do that is through proper mapping.

Our bill would also include a provision that will allow Congress to provide better and greater oversight of FEMA in administering the program. Let me say specifically what it will do.

The very able Administrator at FEMA who handles the Flood Insurance Program testified before the Banking Committee a few months ago that if one of these private insurance companies that administers the Flood Insurance Program for us has lawyers or consultants who are not doing their jobs, FEMA doesn't have the authority to fire them. This bill will give FEMA the authority to fire those consultants, and here is why this is important: Most of the lawyers, engineers, and other consultants private insurance companies hire to help them administer the program on behalf of the National Flood Insurance Program do a pretty good job, but some of them do not. There have been recorded instances both in New Jersey and in Louisiana where certain people, engineers and lawyers, have seen it as their mission to do anything they possibly can to keep a homeowner who has paid his or her hard-earned money to buy insurance from getting the money they deserve if they flood, and that is just wrong.

If you are trying to defraud the National Flood Insurance Program, we need to fight you like a tiger. But if you have paid your premiums and, unfortunately, you have flooded, you are entitled to get your money. You should not be required to fight some engineer or some lawyer who is throwing up obstacle after obstacle after obstacle. Our bill says that if there are consultants who do that and the private insurance companies don't want to fire them, then, by God, FEMA will, and we are going to hold FEMA accountable.

A couple more points I will mention: This bill will also extend coverage limits. Right now, the most flood insurance a homeowner can buy is \$250,000. While that is a lot of money, that doesn't cover some homes, given the rate of inflation in America today, and our bill would expand coverage limits to \$500,000 for homes and \$1.5 million for commercial establishments.

I have talked to some of my colleagues in the Senate and in the House, and some of them, whom I am happy for, represent States that haven't had any major floods, and I hope they never do. But if we have learned anything in the last few years in terms of flooding, we have learned that just when men and women think they can control everything in this world and can control their destiny, they can't control God and Mother Nature. Flooding can happen at any time.

Let me say it again. You can live in a mountain State. You can live on top of a mountain. But if you get 23 inches of rain in 2 days, you are going to flood, and that is why you need flood insurance. That is why this bill is not just important to coastal States like Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, New Jersey, and Maryland; it is important to all Americans.

This is a bipartisan bill. Have I mentioned that? I think I did. This is a bipartisan bill. It is supported by many

Democrats. It is supported by many Republicans. It is a bill that is not only important for our economy, but it is important for the peace of mind of the American people. I hope we will not let politics get in the way of doing what we know to be right.

Once again, the bill is called the SAFE—which stands for Sustainable, Affordable, Fair, and Efficient—National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. I hope this body will come together as one and support this much needed legislation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING LIEUTENANT PATRICK WEATHERFORD

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay respect to a law enforcement officer in my home State of Arkansas who lost his life in the line of duty yesterday, Monday, June 12, 2017.

Lieutenant Patrick Weatherford of the Newport Police Department joined other officers in responding to the call of a vehicle break-in when he was shot. Sadly, Lieutenant Weatherford passed away later that evening.

Lieutenant Weatherford served on the Newport police force for 15 years and recently graduated from the FBI Academy. He was also a graduate of ASU-Newport and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Lieutenant Weatherford was recognized as the 2016 Jackson County Officer of the Year by Arkansas attorney general Leslie Rutledge.

His colleagues had great respect and admiration for him, and he was known as an officer who performed his duties with professionalism and skill.

This is the second Arkansas law enforcement officer we have lost in 2017. Any occasion when someone who is sworn to protect and serve their community does not return home to the loved ones waiting for them is incredibly sad and heartbreaking. Arkansans value the men and women who volunteer to help ensure and enhance public safety knowing the risks involved.

We are devastated by the loss of another law enforcement officer in our State, and we thank all of those who sacrifice so much to protect us.

I want to encourage my colleagues to pass the Honoring Hometown Heroes Act to allow Governors to order the American flag to fly at half-staff in recognition of the sacrifice of first responders like Lieutenant Weatherford who make the ultimate sacrifice.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Lieutenant Weatherford's family and friends, as well as the community he served, which will no doubt miss him dearly. I pray they will all find comfort during such a difficult time as this.

I also stand with all Arkansans in expressing our gratitude for Lieutenant Weatherford's service and commit to honoring the sacrifice he and others have made to protect us.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the committee substitute amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the committee-reported substitute amendment to Calendar No. 110, S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Crapo, Mike Rounds, Tom Cotton, Bob Corker, Steve Daines, John Barrasso, Rob Portman, Jeff Flake, Dan Sullivan, John Hoeven, James M. Inhofe, John Cornyn, John Thune, Cory Gardner, Ron Johnson.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the underlying bill, S. 722.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 110, S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Mike Crapo, Jeff Flake, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, Tom Cotton, Bob Corker, Steve Daines, Dan Sullivan, John Hoeven, James M. Inhofe, John Cornyn, John Thune, Cory Gardner, John Barrasso, Ron Johnson, Rob Portman.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls with respect to the cloture motions be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO CAROLYN LERNER AND MARK COHEN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the service of Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner. Ms. Lerner's term as the leader of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, OSC, has expired. By many accounts, she has been the most successful leader of that office in the agency's 40 year history.

This office has a critical mission, one that is more important now than ever. It protects government whistleblowers and helps to eliminate government waste, fraud, and abuse. It is also responsible for the enforcement of the Hatch Act, which keeps the Federal workplace free from improper partisan politics.

Special Counsel Lerner was confirmed unanimously by the Senate in June 2011. During her tenure, she restored the integrity of the Office of Special Counsel after a difficult period. Moreover, she reestablished the OSC as a safe and effective office to defend government whistleblowers.

Moreover, I would also like to recognize the exemplary service of her principal deputy, Mark Cohen, who is leaving government service as well. The OSC played a critical role in protecting hundreds of whistleblowers at the Department of Veterans Affairs. They worked with these courageous employees to improve care for veterans at hospitals across the country, including efforts to improve conditions for veterans in the Baltimore VA.

Under Ms. Lerner and Mr. Cohen's leadership, the OSC worked with Homeland Security whistleblowers to end an improper overtime program, saving the taxpayers \$100 million a year according to the Congressional Budget Office.

These and many, many other victories for whistleblowers and taxpayers set a new standard in terms of effectiveness for this important office.

As my colleague and friend from Maryland, Congressman CUMMINGS, stated in a recent Washington Post article, "Ms. Lerner turned the Office of Special Counsel 'into a model agency and set the bar as the head of that office.'" I ask unanimous consent to have this article printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

As Senator GRASSLEY, a longtime champion of government whistleblowers, stated in the same article, "Her leadership should be a road map for future leaders of this office."

Given the office's important good government role, the OSC enjoyed broad, bipartisan support under Lerner

and Cohen's leadership. I concur with my colleagues and encourage the next leaders of that office to follow their lead as I pay tribute to their government service.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, June 7, 2017]

SPECIAL COUNSEL LERNER LEAVES OFFICE AS TRUMP REJECTS HIGHLY PRAISED WHISTLEBLOWER ADVOCATE

(By Joe Davidson)

The defining moment for the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) after Carolyn Lerner became head of the agency was a gruesome one about body parts and a dismembered Marine.

It's not the usual fare for the office on M Street NW that deals with Hatch Act violations and prohibited personnel practices. But protecting whistleblowers is where OSC makes its reputation—as in the 2011 case involving the Defense Department's Port Mortuary in Dover, Del.

Soon this little but powerful office will have a new special counsel. Rejecting the advice of Republicans and Democrats to keep Lerner, President Trump has nominated Henry Kerner to take her place. He is a former Republican congressional staffer and currently assistant vice president at the Cause of Action Institute, a small-government advocacy organization.

Lerner, who leaves office on June 14, had been on the job only a few months when she revealed reports by federal employees of grisly transgressions at the morgue operated by the Air Force. Body parts were lost in two cases, and in another, the office reported that the mangled body of a Marine "was dismembered with a saw in order to make the body fit inside a military uniform, without the consent or notification of the family."

With a staff that wouldn't begin to fill one Pentagon hallway, Lerner humbled and embarrassed the Defense Department, the government's largest agency. Lawmakers were appalled. The Air Force secretary at the time expressed his sincere "regret" for "lapses in our standards at Dover," a non-apologetic understatement.

The action of the Office of Special Counsel—no relation to a special prosecutor or to Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election—secured mortuary reforms and protected the employees who were targets of Air Force retaliation.

"I think that we have sent the federal community a message that whistleblowers should be valued," Lerner said Monday in her office overlooking St. Matthew's Cathedral. "Whistleblowers now feel comfortable coming forward, and that is helping our government."

The Port Mortuary case "really helped the federal community understand that OSC was robust enforcer of whistleblower laws," she added.

Considering the widespread retaliation against federal whistleblowers, her assessment of their comfort might be optimistic, but there is no doubt that the Office of Special Counsel is a more robust agency than the moribund place they found before she got there.

It moved "from last-resort option to first choice for getting relief for whistleblowers," said Tom Devine, legal director of the Government Accountability Project, a whistleblower advocacy organization.

Relief for individual whistleblowers also can mean systemic improvements for federal agencies and taxpayers. The Department of Veterans Affairs is the obvious example.

Congress approved VA improvements following a 2014 scandal over the coverup of long patient wait times, which was revealed by whistleblowers. Whistleblower disclosures also led to a new overtime pay system for Border Patrol agents. Lerner's office was instrumental in both.

Devine's strong praise for OSC is not unqualified. "The bad news is they operate at a molasses pace" in some instances, he said. He added that he would like Lerner to be more aggressive about taking legal action against federal agencies that violate whistleblower rights.

Despite the slow pace, agency statistics show impressive gains. There were "276 favorable actions for whistleblowers and other victims of PPPs [prohibited personnel practices] this past year, more than double the annual average," the office said in its budget justification to Congress. "In the last two years, OSC has achieved five times the number of favorable actions in whistleblower retaliation complaints than in any prior two-year period in agency history. . . . In FY 2016, for the second straight year, OSC received upwards of 6,000 new matters, a 25 percent increase over the prior two-year period."

The increased caseload leads to bigger backlogs, but it also demonstrates that employees are more willing to trust the office with sensitive cases.

Ironical criticism comes from James J. Wilson, the agency's chief human capital officer. He filed a whistleblower retaliation complaint against Lerner with the Merit Systems Protection Board after failing to find success before the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Regarding his complaints to the council, Wilson, who previously filed grievances against former employers at two other agencies, signed an affidavit saying, "I received final decisions closing these four matters with no further action being taken."

Whatever the criticism of Lerner, it is outweighed by praise from whistleblowers and Members of Congress.

"She's fearless," Robert MacLean, an air marshal whistleblower, told me earlier this year. His was the first federal whistleblower case heard by the Supreme Court and MacLean credits his victory largely to work done by OSC.

Unusual in this era of hyper-polarization, she is lauded by both sides of the aisle.

"Leading the Office of Special Counsel requires a deep appreciation for the patriotic work that whistleblowers do to shine a light on fraud or misconduct in government. Carolyn Lerner has been a steadfast advocate for government whistleblowers, and I am grateful for her service at OSC," said Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. "Her leadership should be a road map for future leaders of this office."

The Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus, founded by Grassley and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), had urged the Trump administration to retain Lerner.

"I am disappointed the president chose not to take Sen. Grassley's and my recommendation to renominate Carolyn Lerner, who is an experienced leader with bipartisan support," said Wyden.

It's also bicameral. Before Trump's decision, Rep. Rod Blum (Iowa), Republican chairman of the House Whistleblower Protection Caucus, led a bipartisan House letter saying Lerner deserved another term. Among those who signed was Rep. Elijah Cummings (Md.), the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Lerner turned the Office of Special Counsel "into a model agency and set the bar as the